

tiny, were now required to brave the northern blast, as they had formerly braved the vertical sun of Egypt.¹ Napoleon, who, above all generals, was remarkable for the choice of his fields of battle, did not wish to wait tranquilly until the Russian army, which was advancing towards Germany, should coine to measure its strength with him in the plains of conquered Prussia ; he resolved to march to meet it, and to reach it before it should cross the Vistula; but before he left Berlin to explore, as a conqueror, Poland and the confines of Russia, he addressed a proclamation to his troops, in which he stated all that had hitherto been achieved by the French army, and at the same time announced his future intentions. It was especially advisable that he should march forward ; for, had he waited until the Russians had passed the Vistula, there could probably have been no winter campaign, and he would have been obliged either to take up miserable winter quarters between the Vistula and the Oder, or to recross the Oder to combat the enemy in Prussia. Napoleon's military genius and indefatigable activity served him admirably on this occasion, and the proclamation just alluded to, which was dated from Berlin before his departure from Charlotten-

¹ A curious meteorological coincidence may be noted here. The passage of the Niemen by the French army, and its consequent entry on Russian territory, may be said to have been Napoleon's first step towards his ultimate defeat and ruin. A terrible thunderstorm occurred on this occasion, according to M. de Se'gur's account of the Russian campaign. When Napoleon commenced the retreat by which he yielded all the country beyond the Elbe (and which may be therefore reckoned the second step towards his downfall), it was accompanied by a thunderstorm more remarkable from occurring at such a season. [Odelben says "C'e'tait un phe'nomene bien extraordinaire dans une pareille saison et avec le froid qu'on venait d'e'prouver," etc. *Campaign of 1818*, vol. i. p. 289.] The first step towards his second downfall, or the third towards his final ruin, was his advance against the British force at Quatre-Bras on the 17th of June, 1815. This also was accompanied by an awful thunderstorm, which (though gathering all the forenoon) commenced at the very moment he made his attack on the British rearguard with Key's corps about 3 p.m., when the first gun fired was instantly responded to by a tremendous peal of thunder. Again at St. Helena, where thunderstorms are unknown, the last breath of Napoleon passed away in the midst of a furious tempest.

Thunder to Wellington was the precursor of victory and triumph. Witness the above-mentioned introduction to the crowning victory of Waterloo, the terrible thunder that scattered the horses of the dragoons on the eve of Salamanca, also the similar storm on the night preceding Sabugal; see *Notes and Queries*, 13th August, 1853.